

detected, suggesting that the youngest leaf tissue of sorghum may utilize a  $C_3$ -like pathway for carbon fixation (Cousins et al 2003). In developing maize leaves, there may be some direct entry of  $CO_2$  into the  $C_3$  pathway in the young tissues (Perchorowicz & Gibbs 1980). As a consequence, young expanding leaves of sorghum and maize may be more responsive to high  $[CO_2]$  than mature leaves, and this may be true also for the  $C_4$  monocot sugarcane.

As observed for a variety of  $C_3$  species, growth of  $C_4$  plants at high  $[CO_2]$  may also lead to an acclimation of the photosynthetic enzymes. In maize grown at triple-ambient  $[CO_2]$ , activities of a number of  $C_3$  and  $C_4$  cycle enzymes decrease while those of the triose-P utilization increase (Maroco et al 1999). In sorghum, there is a 50% reduction in PEPC content in leaves of the high- $CO_2$  plants, while Rubisco does not change (Watling et al 2000). Exactly how an up- or down-regulation of certain photosynthetic enzymes by high  $[CO_2]$  may affect growth of  $C_4$  plants is still not well understood. For sugarcane, growth at high  $[CO_2]$  would benefit through the enhancement in leaf CER and up-regulation in the capacities of certain key photosynthesis and sucrose metabolism enzymes at an early growth stage of the leaf. In addition, even a small, but consistent, percent stimulation in CER at other growth stages (i.e., 32 DALE for sugarcane) may also contribute to the growth enhancement. Also, reductions in stomatal conductance and transpiration under high  $[CO_2]$ , leading to improved WUE, likely play a significant role in the observed enhancement of biomass accumulation in sugarcane.

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## THE RESPONSE OF PLANT

## CARBOHYDRATES TO ELEVATED $CO_2$ . WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT FROM FACE STUDIES?

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**Keywords:** Carbon, Nitrogen, source-sink balance, FACE

## INTRODUCTION

Atmospheric  $CO_2$  concentration ( $[CO_2]$ ) is expected to rise from a current level of  $372 \mu\text{mol mol}^{-1}$  to about  $550 \mu\text{mol mol}^{-1}$  by the middle of the century (Prentice et al 2001). Accumulation of foliar carbohydrates is one of the most pronounced and universal changes observed in the leaves of  $C_3$  plants grown at elevated  $[CO_2]$  (Drake et al 1997). Carbohydrates are the product of photosynthetic cells and the substrate for sink metabolism. However, carbohydrates are not just substrates, changes in the composition and pool size of foliar carbohydrates have the potential to communicate source-sink balance and a role for carbohydrates in the regulation of the expression of many plant genes is well established (Koch 1996). Importantly, carbohydrate feedback is thought to be the mechanism through which long-term exposure to elevated  $[CO_2]$  leads to a reduction in carboxylation capacity (Long et al 2004). Foliar sugar content has recently been linked to an increased susceptibility of soybeans to insect herbivory (Hamilton et al 2004). In addition increases in the C:N ratio of leaf litter of plants grown at elevated  $[CO_2]$  has been implicated in negative feedbacks on ecosystem productivity (Oechel et al 1994). Understanding of the response of foliar carbohydrates will form an important part of our ability to understand and predict the effects of rising  $[CO_2]$  on plants and ecosystems.

As Free-Air  $CO_2$  enrichment technology was emerging, understanding of the link between carbohydrates and plant responses to rising  $[CO_2]$  was increasing. However, there were concerns that the hypotheses generated using model systems or from studies on mostly juvenile plants grown for relatively short periods of time in controlled environments may not translate to the field. Of particular concern was the effect of a limited rooting volume. Arp (1991) argued that photosynthetic acclimation to elevated  $[CO_2]$  was largely an artifact of rooting volume that led to a sink limitation of photosynthesis at elevated  $[CO_2]$ . It has been suggested that this “pot effect” was the result of exacerbated nutrient depletion (Korner 2003), but there is also evidence that physical restriction of root development can cause these feedbacks (Masle et al 1990, Thomas & Strain 1991). Since carbohydrate feedback mechanisms were thought to underlie this response it was unclear whether hypotheses developed in controlled environments would hold up when tested in the field. The central hypothesis around which the uncertainty rested

was that the capacity of sinks to utilize the increased carbon supply produced at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  will determine the response of foliar carbohydrates to growth at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$ . The advent of FACE technology allowed this hypothesis to be tested in the field in open-air conditions where plants lack the constraints that have been considered to limit the response of  $\text{C}_3$  plants to rising  $[\text{CO}_2]$ .

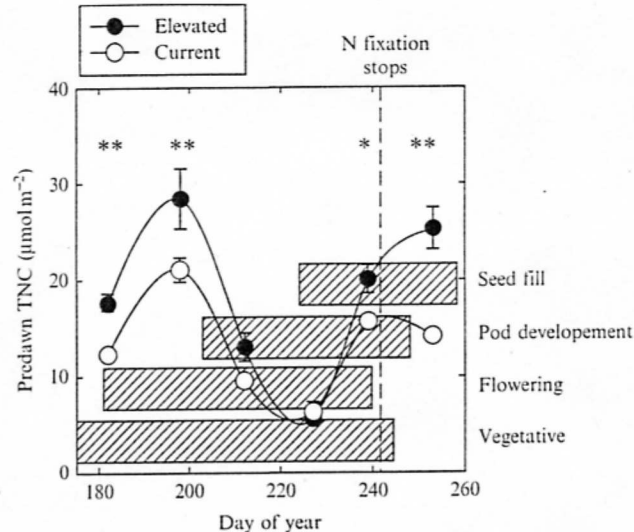
## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The FACE system for exposing vegetation to elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  in the field has been described previously (Hendrey et al 1999, Miglietta et al 1997, Long et al 2004). Succinctly, an approximately circular plot at least 8 m in diameter is surrounded by a ring of pipes that release  $\text{CO}_2$  or air enriched with  $\text{CO}_2$  at vertical intervals just above the ground to just above the top of the canopy. Wind direction, velocity and  $\text{CO}_2$  concentration are measured at the center of each plot, this information is used to control the flow rate and release point of  $\text{CO}_2$  in order to maintain a set point of around  $550 \mu\text{mol mol}^{-1}$ . Foliar carbohydrate content was measured as described by Rogers and Ellsworth (2002) and Rogers et al (2004). Data are presented from work conducted at the SoyFACE experiment. A description of the site and details of the statistical methods used are described by Rogers et al (2004).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Do Plants Grown in the Field Using FACE Technology Accumulate Carbohydrates in Their Leaves?** A meta analysis of the response of foliar carbohydrates to growth at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  using FACE technology showed that for 30 independent studies and four different species, foliar sugar content was on average c. 35% ( $P < 0.05$ ) higher and starch content c. 85% higher ( $P < 0.05$ ) in plants grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  (Long et al 2004). Field grown N-fixing soybean, with indeterminate flowering might be expected to avoid accumulating foliar carbohydrates because of its strong sinks for photosynthate. However, soybean had significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) higher levels of pre-dawn glucose, sucrose and most markedly starch when grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$ . When combined to give total nonstructural carbohydrate (TNC) content (Fig. 1) it is clear that the increase in foliar carbohydrate content at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  is restricted to the beginning and end of the growth season. In the middle of the season there is a strong sink for photosynthate and this may explain the low overall levels of TNC at that time of the year and the lack of a  $\text{CO}_2$  effect at this time. The mean night-time temperature preceding the dawn harvests was not significantly different on the days of measurement ( $P = 0.38$ , data not shown) and the daily integral of  $\text{CO}_2$  uptake did not appear to effect TNC accumulation (Bernacchi, personal communication). Rogers et al (2004) reported similar trends for a different cultivar of soybean also grown in the field using FACE technology.

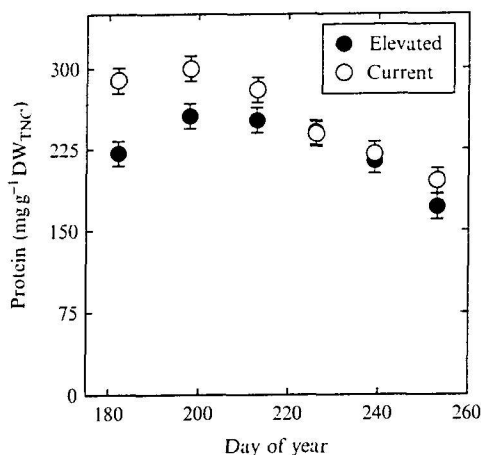
**Source-sink Balance.** *Lolium perenne* is adapted to survive periodic partial defoliation and is managed as a frequently cut herbage crop. Partial defoliation (cutting) abruptly decreases the ratio of photosynthetic tissue to sinks for photoassimilates (roots, pseudo-stems). Leaves in partially defoliated plants will have a greater demand for their photosynthate than similar leaves on intact plants. The accumulation of carbohydrate in source leaves of *Lolium perenne* grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  was eliminated by reducing the



**Figure 1:** Total non-structural carbohydrate content calculated as the sum of glucose, fructose, sucrose and starch measured in the lateral leaflets of the most recently fully expanded trifoliate leaves of soybeans grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  in the field using Free-Air  $\text{CO}_2$  Enrichment technology to raise the concentration of  $\text{CO}_2$  from 370 to  $550 \mu\text{mol mol}^{-1}$ . Samples were taken just before sunrise on three consecutive mornings and the values within each replicate plot pooled to give a mean predawn TNC content for each period of measurement. Data are mean  $\pm$  1s mean for the 4 replicate control (current) and elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  (elevated) plots. Horizontal bars indicate the periods of vegetative growth, flowering, pod fill and seed fill. The broken vertical line indicates the stage in development when N-fixation stops.

source-sink ratio through partial defoliation (Rogers et al 1998). Manipulation of source-sink balance through single gene mutations in soybeans also demonstrated that genetic constraints on sink capacity can result in carbohydrate accumulation at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$ . Soybeans with a determinate growth form accumulated foliar carbohydrates to a greater extent at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  than identical germ-plasm with an indeterminate growth form (Ainsworth et al 2004). When we studied loblolly pine grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  we hypothesized that when proximal sink development was maximal carbohydrate accumulation in needles on pines grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  would be minimal. However, carbohydrate accumulation in loblolly pines grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  did occur despite strong proximal sink development suggesting that distal sinks or interactions with N could be more important in that system (Rogers & Ellsworth 2002).

**Interaction of Elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  and N Supply.** When *Lolium perenne* was grown at two N-supply levels and managed as a frequently cut herbage crop it was found that just before a cut plants grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  with a low N supply had a large accumulation of foliar carbohydrates compared to current  $[\text{CO}_2]$  controls, but that plants grown at elevated  $[\text{CO}_2]$  with a high N supply did not have a significant accumulation of foliar carbohydrates when compared with their current  $[\text{CO}_2]$  controls (Rogers et al 1998). Later in the course of the overall Swiss FACE experiment we found that just before a cut, plants grown at low N began to accumulate significant amounts of foliar carbohydrate over a 24 h time course whereas plants grown at high N did not, this accumulation was exacerbated



**Figure 2:** Leaf protein content of soybeans grown at current and elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>] as described in Fig. 1. Data are expressed on a dry weight basis corrected for the mass of TNC.

at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>], clearly demonstrating the importance of N supply on carbohydrate accumulation.

Supply of carbon can also affect nitrogen status. Soybeans grown at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>] had a significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) lower leaf protein content but this effect was confined to the beginning of the season. Later in crop development levels at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>] matched those at current [CO<sub>2</sub>] (Fig. 2). The supply of ureides from N-fixation peaked in the middle of the season. At this time plants grown at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>], that had a greater supply of carbon skeletons from photosynthesis (Bernacchi, personal communication) and that showed no evidence of carbohydrate accumulation (Fig. 1), had significantly ( $P < 0.01$ , data not shown) lower levels of foliar ureide content. Concomitantly the ratio of free minor amino acids at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>] to that at current [CO<sub>2</sub>] was significantly greater (data not shown). We hypothesize that the extra photosynthate available at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>] allowed the plants to better exploit the high levels of ureide that became available in the middle of the season to make amino acids and raise their leaf protein content.

## CONCLUSION

Despite predictions that field grown plants would not accumulate foliar carbohydrates at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>] we found that an increased carbohydrate content at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>] was commonly observed and that an exacerbated accumulation of foliar carbohydrates at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>] was consistent with our hypothesis that sink capacity determines the response of foliar carbohydrates to growth at elevated [CO<sub>2</sub>].

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## CO<sub>2</sub> ENRICHMENT AND INCREASING TEMPERATURE INDUCE DIFFERENT EFFECTS ON ONTOGENESIS OF *TRITICUM DURUM* L. AND *V. FABA* SSP. *FABA* L

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**Keywords:** CO<sub>2</sub> enrichment, temperature increase, drought stress, seasonal climate, *Triticum durum*, *Vicia faba*

## INTRODUCTION

The ongoing rise in the atmosphere's CO<sub>2</sub> concentration has the potential to increase the quantity of global food production. Additional effects are frequently documented regarding plant traits and the concentrations of health-promoting or fitness-reducing plant constituents in animal and human food (Lawlor & Mitchell 1991).